



Frequently Asked Questions Regarding Proposal to Change Federal Definition of Metropolitan Statistical Areas

Updated: March 2021

The Alabama Department of Economic and Community Affairs has received several questions about a proposed change in the federal designation of Metropolitan Statistical Areas (MSA) and its possible effect on the Community Development Block Grant Program. ADECA is providing this document to answer some of the common questions to the best of our ability and based on current information.

What is the Office of Management and Budget proposing to change regarding Metropolitan Statistical Areas?

In early 2021, the federal Office of Management and Budget (OMB) placed on the federal register a proposal to change the definition of a Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) from a minimum population of cities that constitute the core of an MSA from a minimum population of 50,000 to a minimum population of 100,000.

Current MSA definition: 50,000 minimum population

Proposed MSA definition: 100,000 minimum population

According to the Brookings Institution, the shift was recommended to OMB by the Metropolitan and Micropolitan Statistical Area Standards Review Committee, an interagency committee of statistical experts within the federal government, after a two-year reexamination that occurs regularly in conjunction with the decennial census.

[Click here to read the full OMB recommendation.](#)

What is the status of this proposal?

The OMB placed the proposal on the federal register in February and asked for public comments. The comment period closed on March 18 with many groups expressing concern to OMB and the U.S. Census Bureau about the potential ramifications and urging the office to closely examine the potential effects of a change in the definition.

How many Metropolitan Statistical Areas does Alabama currently have?

Alabama currently has 12 MSAs. They are: Anniston-Oxford, Auburn-Opelika, Birmingham-Hoover, Daphne-Fairhope-Foley, Decatur, Dothan, Florence-Muscle Shoals, Gadsden, Huntsville, Mobile, Montgomery, and Tuscaloosa.

Will this have an impact on the Community Development Block Grant Program?

Because this is currently a proposal only, ADECA anticipates no changes to the Community Development Block Grant program or status of CDBG entitlement or non-entitlement communities at this time.

When would a proposed change take effect?

Currently, the change is a proposal only. There has been no firm decision by OMB to make the change.